

SPRING IN EASTERN SPAIN: Plants and gardens in the province of Alicante

Sunday 15 April to Sunday 22 April 2018

Spring on Spain's Costa Blanca varies from year to year but this trip should catch gardens in their spring freshness before the heat builds up. Among other treats members will see wild flowers including orchids near Javea and have the opportunity to walk on the Montgó massif. They'll visit a Moorish-style garden cum museum, the renowned palm groves and Huerto del Cura garden of Elche, the exemplary Albarda gardens near Denia which mimic Renaissance gardens of Valencia and a variety of private gardens.



This will be a two-centre trip, staying the first nights in Elche and moving on to Denia. At left is a general view of the grounds of the Hotel Huerto del Cura, Elche, close to the famous gardens and palm museum.

<http://www.huertodelcura.com/en/>

An alternative hotel in Elche is the Jardin Milenio, a bit further from the centre but still within easy walking distance and also with pleasant grounds. Both the Hotel Huerto del Cura and the Hotel Jardin Milenio have four stars.

<http://www.hotelmilenio.com/>



Another possibility in Elche is the three-star Hotel Tryp El Ciudad Elche, on a fairly busy street close to the centre of the city. It may be noisier than the two more luxurious hotels but is convenient for the centre and cheaper than the others.

<https://www.melia.com/en/hotels/spain/elche/tryp-ciudad-de-elche-hotel/index.html>



While the group is based in Elche there will be visits to a botanical research station in the hills, to Carmen del Campillo (a Moroccan tea garden), a Spanish professor's "Roman" garden, and to the private garden and plant collection of Carol and Alan Hawes. Part of Carol and Alan's garden is divided into sections for different continents (Africa, America and Australia). Alan has recently built a shade house and loves eucalyptus trees, of which he has a collection.

The photo at left shows *Calliandra tweediei*, originally from Brazil, in Alan and Carol's garden.



Above, aspects of Carmen del Campillo – the Moroccan tea garden.

Right: Wild flowers at the Biological Station and Botanic Garden of Torretes near Ibi in early April 2017.
Glaucium corniculatum (Red-horned Poppy), *Euphorbia serrata*, *Platycapnos spicatus* (Spiked Fumitory)



The second half of the tour will be based in Denia at hotels on or near the attractive working port which supplies the nearby fish market and from which there are regular ferries to and from the Balearics.



La Posada del Mar (left) is one of the hotels the MPG group will use, and is located in central Denia. From Denia we will visit the typically Mediterranean Albarda Garden (below), owned by a private foundation which encourages conservation and the use of native species.



The programme is provisional. The outline below includes visits which may in the end be left out. On the other hand, new elements may be added and the order of events will change as plans develop. We need, however, to book hotel rooms, so please **apply for a place as soon as you can**. Offers of places will be made with – it is hoped – definite costs, and deposits of about £200 per person (or a euro amount to be advised) will be requested on about 15 August.

Sunday 15 April 2018	Arrival and welcome dinner
Next three days	Visits to two contrasting private gardens, a Moorish tea garden with fascinating plants, buildings and curios, a botanical research station in the foothills of the mountains behind Alicante with a renowned iris collection, the palm museum and palm groves of Elche and the town's beautiful Huerto del Cura garden and central squares. Lunches will be typically Spanish, one in the city, one in the countryside and one in a garden.
Final days based in Denia	We will spend a morning and have a light lunch at the Albarda Gardens which are stunning, with native plants and everything beautifully and imaginatively designed. It is surprising that these gardens are not better known. http://www.jardinalbarda.com/description/?lang=en There will be visits to private gardens, a cactus and succulent specialist, the garden of a small lavender farm and a local wild-plant enthusiast will give an illustrated lecture one evening before dinner and will guide the group to see wild flowers – particularly orchids – the following day. There may also be a longer optional walk led by a British retired professional gardener.

The cost of the trip is expected to be approximately £670 to £800 per person, with a supplement of about £235 for single occupancy of a double room. We'll try to match up single members who would like to share a twin room.

The fee for the trip will include transport during the tour, entrance fees, accommodation, guides and meals other than one dinner in Denia (giving members an evening to explore) and tea at Carmen del Campillo (where it is impracticable to pay as a group). Wine with meals is included occasionally. Flights and airport transfers are not included.

The more expensive hotels are the Hotel Huerto del Cura in Elche and La Posada del Mar in Denia). These have four stars. The slightly more economical hotels are the Hotel Jardin Milenio in Elche and El Raset in Denia. The websites for Hotel Huerto del Cura and Hotel Jardin Milenio are beside their pictures on page 1 and the Denia hotels websites are <http://laposadadelmar.com/en/index.php>
<http://www.hotelelraset.com/en/>

Taxis and airport buses are available from Alicante airport to Elche. At the end of the week members can take a bus or trains back to Alicante airport or north to Valencia. Some may wish to extend their stay to visit Valencia. It will be possible to arrange a minibus if several members want to do the same thing.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO GO ON THIS TOUR:

Please read the terms below, then write to Heather Martin (hma@clara.net) **as soon as possible** requesting a place.

TERMS

MPG is an association of like-minded individuals interested in Mediterranean plants and gardens, with members organising events and tours for other members on a mutually supportive basis. MPG is not a tour operator and trips are open only to members of MPG and its sister organisations. Trips such as this are organised by members and for members, in the spirit MPG was founded, namely so that members can help each other finding and learning about plants and/or gardens, and exploring places that may be special. We aim to run things at break-even, work being done mainly by volunteers. Events are subject to alteration due to the weather, personal circumstances of guides or garden owners, and other circumstances which can't be controlled. Members organising events on behalf of and/or for the benefit of members cannot be held liable for any claims.

Trips vary in the amount of physical fitness required, and medical facilities are variable and can be very costly. If you have any doubts about your fitness, you should consult your own medical advisor.

To participate in this trip, you must have in place comprehensive travel insurance with "independent traveller" cover. If you would have to take out insurance specially for this trip you can check with Heather first to ensure that a place is available. You would have to provide a 24-hour contact number of your insurance company and any other details required in an emergency.